



# eTXT:

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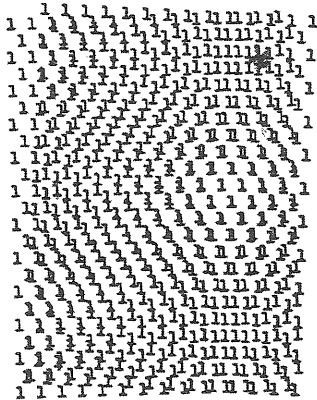
## new texts for a new media

From the Editor

What are the textures of today's digital poetics?

### Ted Warnell

artist and writer specializing in content for new media



### Virtual Skin: Visual-Kinetic Poetries in Context by William Marsh

Artist, writer, publisher William Marsh opens with a brief look at recent poetics history.

His work examines new developments in Web poetics in relation to the international Visual-Concrete poetry movement of the 1950's and 60's.

Why are sentences from an elementary school primer being displayed in this way?

1

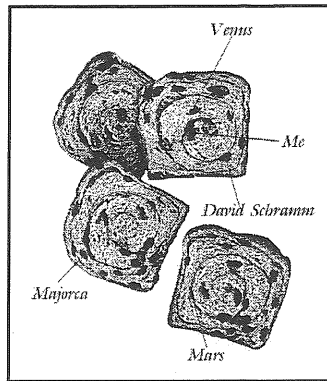
### Words in Space by David Knoebel

Artist and writer David Knoebel explores the simultaneity and discontinuity of text..

His work demonstrates possibilities for composing words in spaces real and cyber..

As an example, consider the following sentences: "See Spot run. Run, Spot, run!" Since these are familiar sentences, we can **concentrate** on the effect of various formal **strategies**. Imagine the words printed singly on a series of **billboards** along a highway.

### Raisin Bread?



### The Meeting of Image and Text by Christy Sheffield Sanford

Artist and writer Christy Sheffield Sanford examines use of image and text in the new media.

Her work looks at how the two complement and balance each other; how they can co-exist and maintain integrity without reducing to illustration or exposition.

Ted Warnell <warnell@memlane.com> <http://www.logicnet.com/ted.warnell/> is an artist and writer specializing in content for new media. His visual and literary works are found in real and cyberspace art galleries, and in print, digital, and Web publications. Ted lives and works in Canada.

## **Upcoming Ylem Programs at the Exploratorium**

Ylem Forums are held the second Wednesday of January, March, May July, September, and November (odd-numbered months) at the Exploratorium

### **August 8-13 SIGGRAPH**

#### **26th International Conference on Computer and Interactive Techniques.**

This year's theme is "Make Connections." The location for this year's conference is the Los Angeles Convention Center. This is your opportunity to review the latest advancements in the web, telecommunications, medical imaging, engineering design tools, practical virtual environments, and alternative interfaces. This computer graphics conference features seminars and exhibits offering access to latest developments.

For more information:

E-mail: [siggraph99@siggraph.org](mailto:siggraph99@siggraph.org)  
Website: [www.siggraph.org/s99/](http://www.siggraph.org/s99/)  
Conference Management  
Smith, Bucklin & Associates, Inc.  
401 North Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois 60611.  
Phone 312-321-6830  
Fax 312-321-6876

### **September 17-19 MUSIC AND MANIPULATION**

Conference at the National Palace ("Nalen"), Stockholm, Sweden on the Social Uses and Social Control of Music. "Music and Manipulation" deals with a host of timely issues related to the role of music in society and history, and should have a broad appeal to people working in musicology, music psychology, sociology, history, political science, film, advertising, semiotics, and the music industry itself. This program brings together a wide range of topics of relevance to the role of music in society and to music's place in our cultural heritage.

#### **ORGANIZERS:**

Division of Psychosocial Factors and Health  
Department of Public Health Sciences  
KAROLINSKA INSTITUTE, in cooperation with the  
Swedish Artists and Musicians Interests  
Organization (SAMI).

The conference is being presented in the context of "The Year of the Brain" in Sweden. See further:  
<http://www.sami.se/manipulation/>

#### **CONTACT PERSON**

Steven Brown ([Steven.Brown@neuro.ki.se](mailto:Steven.Brown@neuro.ki.se))  
Ulrik Volgsten ([Ulrik.Volgsten@music.su.se](mailto:Ulrik.Volgsten@music.su.se))

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### **Organizing an Ylem Exhibition**

If you organize a show with several Ylem artists where the art is related to either technology or science and is presented and promoted in a professional manner, then Ylem can help you by sending you information about Ylem to go in your publicity packets.

Contact::

Trudy Myrrh Reagan  
967 Moreno  
Palo Alto, CA 94303 USA  
<[trudymyrrh@aol.com](mailto:trudymyrrh@aol.com)> ■

# Virtual Skin:

By William Marsh

## A Brief Look at Visual-Kinetic Poetries in Context

What are the textures of today's digital poetries? Or to put it another way, how do we define the material conditions of screen space? Until recently, poetry as a literary art has been a page art, meaning its textures (its feel and appearances, its arrangements) have been strictly aligned with the physical surfaces on which it has appeared — namely, for most Western readers at least, the printed page and the paper book. "Screen space" implies a quasi-new location for the activity of poetry. What qualifies recent innovations in digital-based poetry, however, are its allegiances (implicit and explicit) to the page or ink-based poetries from which it has evolved. Digital poetry exists at the intersection — historically, aesthetically — of page and screen. A closer look at the nature of this intersection might help contextualize recent efforts.

But first it should be made clear that the space of the screen (in this case the computer screen) is also a time of performance. One appeal of composing electronically is the opportunity it presents to write dynamically — and to create a dynamic writing. Even the lexicon of recent scripting languages suggests a relationship between "objects" (words and images)

and the "events" and "behaviors" by which static objects become dynamic. Things happen on the screen that quite simply do not happen on the page. It also helps, therefore, to consider how a seemingly static object such as page text stands in relation to the potentially kinetic surfaces of screen text. Generally speaking, all readings are kinetic in the sense that a reader must move through a text in time, but the time of this reading serves metaphorically in traditional poetry to recall or anticipate the time of recitation. Screen eventuality invites a new kind of interaction with text by which "space is

not just a notation, at best a stand-in for time" but rather a "structural unit" of composition (Higgins 33). Similarly, time and its emissaries — motion, event, behavior — enter in as structural devices in the new screen writing.

*...one of the exciting attributes of poetry  
today is that page work and screen work not  
only fail to exclude each other but in fact  
inform each other's developing gestures.*

As Kurt Brereton writes, "the poem has shifted from bricolage to morphosis," in other words from a flat constructed surface to a "a virtual field unfolding

in time." Of course, a comprehensive aesthetics allows for both instances, and one of the exciting attributes of poetry today is that page work and screen work not only fail to exclude each other but in fact inform each other's developing gestures. The *bricoleur* and the *morpher* work together in either or both domains, and the tendency toward performative movement that we see in electronic poetry implies more generally an aesthetic *motility* by which the potential or capability for movement is always present, in page or screen endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

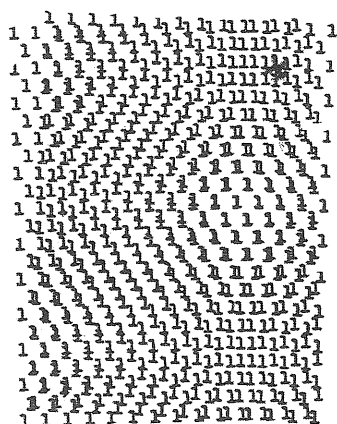
Nonetheless, it is precisely the "plasticity of form" (Brereton) that often distinguishes a digital poetry. As Michael Joyce phrases it, "[p]rint stays itself; electronic text replaces itself. If with the book we are always printing — always opening another text unreasonably composed of the same gestures — with electronic text we are always painting, each screen unreasonably washing away what was and replacing it with itself" (186). The appeal to "painting" as the analogue for screen composition in my opinion marks one of the chief difficulties of writing about this subject — particularly, that such analogies don't hold in relation to an art form so strictly aligned with the hard and soft technologies it employs. At best we get the "feel" for digital space as reminiscent of the physical (atomic) spaces our bodies inhabit — but this reminiscence only begins to define (and perhaps distracts from a clearer sense of) the material conditions of digital poetry. Joyce seems aware of this apparent deferral: "The eye never rests upon it [e-text], though we are apt to feel the finger can touch it. The feel for electronic text is constant and plastic, the transubstantiated smear that, like Silly Putty, gives way to liquid or, like a painter's acrylics, forms into still encapsulated light" (186).

As an intermedial art, digital poetry cannot specifically delineate its borders or its modi operandi without risking closure, so problems in defining its textures and material effects on a reader/viewer are therefore unavoidable and even essential to its project. Nonetheless, it might help to define current experiments in digital poetry in relation to earlier movements in poetry and visual art — particularly, for the purpose of this brief overview, in relation to the international Visual-Concrete poetry movement of the 1950's and 60's. In the statements and manifestos of these writers we find a discourse often strikingly similar to that currently underway among the practitioners of digital or Web-based poetics. Working with the space of the page as a visual medium for word sculpture, several of these writers set out in the “static” domain of print to affect “kinetic” patternings serving in many ways as prototypes for current digital installations.

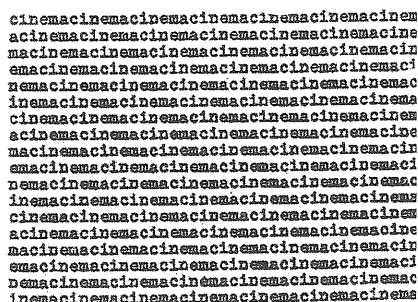
The Brazilian *Noigandres* group [c. 1950-60], for example, which included DÈcio Pignatari and Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, practiced in their concrete texts what they termed a “space-time isomorphism, which creates movement” (in Solt, 13). On the page they found a “tension of things-words in space-time,” a “[d]ynamic structure,” and a “multiplicity of concomitant movements “ (in Solt, 72). In Europe, French poet Pierre Garnier defined poetry as “transmitted energy,” turning “from art to action, from recitation to constellation, from phrase to structure, from song to the center of energy” (in Solt, 34/79).<sup>ii</sup> In both form and function, Emmett Williams’ flip-book “SWEETHEARTS” anticipates contemporary uses of digital animation, in that its sections “can be animated by flipping the pages fast enough to achieve a primitive cinematic effect[;]... the words and the kinetic visual metaphors work hand in hand to express what the poem is all about” (in Solt 51). Miekal And’s animated, Web-based poem “after emmett” [<http://net22.com/qazingulaza/joglars/afteremmett/bonvoyage.html>] alludes overtly both to the legacy of Visual-Concrete poetry in today’s digital word arts and to the “flip-book” structure of computer-based GIF animation. Each screen of And’s installation yields nine cells (in a 3x3 square) with each cell housing a letter cycling frenetically through a series of font variations. The hand-operated flip-book is thus transported to the automatic realm of digitized image animation.

Williams’ flip-book (and by extension Miekal And’s animation) offers an example of what Mary Ellen Solt has characterized as the third type (in addition to “visual” and “sound”) of concrete poetry, i.e., “kinetic (moving in a visual succession)” (7). The term ‘kinetic’ enjoys a long history in relation to the arts<sup>iii</sup>, particularly and most recently as it was used in the heyday of the Kinetic Art movement of the 50's and 60's. As Frank Popper explains in *Origins and Development of Kinetic Art* (1968), kinetic art “covers all two or three-dimensional works in actual movement, including machines, mobiles and projections, whether controlled or uncontrolled; it also covers works in virtual movement, that is to say, in which the spectator’s eye responds quite clearly to the physical stimuli” (95).

Some early examples of Visual-Concrete poetry demonstrate the second, “virtual” movement described below. While there is no literal movement on the page, Valoch’s “Homage to Ladislav Novk” clearly attempts to “stimulate” the spectator’s eye in its careful arrangement of letters — in this case, the letter ‘l’ — to affect a more fluid visual experience (Figure 1).



(Figure 1)



(Figure 2)

Pierre and Ilse Garnier’s “Text for a Building” (Figure 2) playfully alludes to its cinematic borrowings while variantly placed letters of the word “cinema” create a streaming or cascading effect on the page.

(continued on page 11)

# Words in Space

by David Knoebel

## 0. Words in space

**W**e live among words. They appear, for the most part, on a continuous surface, such as a sheet of paper or the screen of a computer. These words are meant to be read sequentially and in a predetermined order. Other words, however, appear all around us. They inhabit billboards and flashy sneakers. They litter the bottoms of oceans, and they hover above our heads during summer days at the beach. We experience these words as part of the jumble of everyday events that are both simultaneous and discontinuous. They seem unlikely to yield anything that is useful or beautiful. Serious writing, we think, must be done on the page. We overlook the possibility of composing with words in space.

### 1. Words that stay in front of us

#### 1.1 Ink on paper

Text remains fixed on the page. We move our hands and our eyes to read. This movement is **articulated** in several ways. We move through a book by hand, turning pages **repeatedly**. Pages are hinged at the spine of a book. The hinged page is a plane that rotates through space. As the page **approaches** a right angle with respect to our field of vision, the text becomes **foreshortened**. We hardly notice these

events, but they keep us connected, if only

⑤ **subliminally**, to the world around us.

In the West, we begin reading at the upper left of the page. We move our eyes to the right across a line of text, then back and down to the beginning of the next line. This **repetition** continues down the page to the bottom, when the eyes shift up and begin again at the top of the next page. Within each line of text, we discover the detail of the work: the words, their sounds, and their patterns of syllable stress.

There are other ways to read. Words are **continuously** present on the page. We can choose where to start and how to proceed. We can go back over the words. We can read them in any order. We can read clusters of words. **Advertisements** and poetry often present unusual **arrangements** of words that invite us to explore different ways of reading.

#### 1.2 Phosphor under glass

Text may also be fixed on a computer screen. In such a case, the screen is roughly **equivalent** to the page, and the reader proceeds through the work by moving from screen to screen. Hypertext offers the choice

of branching off through links embedded within each screen of text. While the reader can move at will through the text, the movement is initiated by pressing a key or a mouse button. New text replaces old text upon the plane of the screen. The **experience** of turning a page, of rotating a hinged plane through space, is lost.

Text on a screen is more commonly read by scrolling. The screen becomes an opening through which we see a part of the text flowing by, much as we see only a part of the road before us when we drive. Its beginning and end are out of sight. We rely on some **representation** of the text or the highway, i.e., a progress bar or a road map, to keep track of where we are in relation to the whole. With a book, it's a simple matter of noting where the bookmark stands in relation to the front and back covers.

Still another way of reading involves **individual** words, or clusters of words, which appear at intervals at the same place on a screen. In contrast to the previous examples, almost no movement is required to read when text is presented this way. The reader simply gazes at one spot on the screen as the words flash by. Used **frequently** in **television commercials**, this technique complements the general passivity induced by television programming.

### 2. Words that pass us by

The words discussed so far have at least one thing in common: they remain in front of us as we read. In contrast, when we drive down the street, we are **surrounded** by words that pass us by. Driving home, we encounter the same signs we saw on the way to work, in reverse order. Trips around town, to the gas station, the **supermarket**, or the post

(continued on page 9)

# Ylem Calendar

## Upcoming Ylem Programs at the Exploratorium

All are on Wednesday evenings

Some calendar items are reprinted from *Art Calendar* (the monthly marketing and career management journal for artists, P.O.Box 199, Upper Fairmont, Md; Subscriptions \$32/yr), *Artweek*, *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, *Artech* <artstech@thecity.sfsu.edu>, and *FineArts Forum Online* <paulbrown@siggraph.org>. We cannot verify all information sent to us. Please inform us of incorrect information.

All events and exhibits are in the San Francisco except where noted.

We want your announcements! To insure that they appear in the next newsletter send 6 weeks before the publication date. Announcements may be e-mailed to Lewis Bangham at [Banghaml@hotmail.com](mailto:Banghaml@hotmail.com). Also send notices to the Ylem website where they can appear on shorter notice. (Address on back cover.)

Ylem Forums are held the 2nd Wednesday of January, March, May, July, September & November (odd-numbered months) at the Exploratorium.

## Exhibits

June 30 -July 23

### Archaeology of Being

A collaborative multimedia installation by Ylem members **Ruth Eckland**, **Kent Manske** and **Nanette Wylde**. Reception Friday, July 9, 6 PM to 8 PM.

*Works Gallery*  
30 N. Third St.  
San Jose, CA  
Tel: 408-295-8378

Exhibitions through July 31

### The Electric Palette

**James Albert**, **Li Gardener**, **Rob Costin**, **Eleanor Kent**, **Eric Ehlenberger**, **Steve R. Poe** Digital images, xerox monoprints, and neon.

*The Music Annex, Inc.*  
69 Green Street  
Monday through Friday,  
9 AM to 6 PM  
Exhibit may also be viewed  
at [www.artsworksf.com](http://www.artsworksf.com).

## Opportunities

Deadline: September 30th

### Symposium En Red O

#### CALL FOR SOUND ART AND MUSIC WORKS RELATED TO SOUNDSCAPE

Symposium En Red O 1999 is dedicated to Soundscape Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona (Spain), November 10th-12th 1999. Selected works will be programmed in chill-out sessions providing a platform for works produced from materials related to some aspect of the Soundscape of the creators' environments. The chill-out sessions will be devoted to the Soundscapes of Barcelona and World Soundscapes (other cities and environments). Works of all aesthetic tendencies will be welcome.

Formats admitted: Data CD-ROM with AIFF, SND (Mac) or Wave (PC) files- 16 bit, 44.1 KHz, CD-Audio and DAT.. The results of these three days will be made into an audio CD-ROM including the theoretical contributions and extracts from the works programmed. As of early October, extracts of the works

selected will be on show at <<http://www.cccb.es/caos/soundscape>> and <<http://usuarios.intercom.es/coclea/soundscape>>.

*Postal packages should be sent to: Orquesta del Caos/ En Red O, CCCB, Montalegre, 5, E-08001 Barcelona, Spain.*

*For more info contact: Clara Gar a <[clcoclea@intercom.es](mailto:clcoclea@intercom.es)>*

Deadline October 31

### Y2K Gallery Film Fest

Spring 2000. Video artists asked to submit short films, documentaries, biographies, or other works in film media for jury review. Works must be complete. Artists will be notified acceptance by Nov. 30.

*Send entries to: Anthony Kelley, Director at SOHO Gallery, 29 Palafox Place South, Pensacola, Fla 32501*

Deadline July 1

### Collaboration Project

Open to all artists working collaboratively, or seeking collaboration, working in all media, including emerging technologies, site specific installation, sound, and performance. Stipend. Seeking proposals for an exhibit in November. (continued on page 7)

## Ylem Calendar

Proposals should include a one page written description, 8 slides, slide list, resume, relevant support materials. SASE to: K. Schmitendorf, curator, Dishman Art Gallery, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX 77710. Tel: 409-880-8959. [dishman\\_art@hal.lamar.edu](mailto:dishman_art@hal.lamar.edu)

Deadline: July 9

### Collage artists of America National Open Exhibition 9/18-10/23

Open to all artists working in collage and assemblage: Wall hung, not exceed 40 lbs. Awards, 25% commission for sale. Entry form required.

7 For prospectus SASE to L Ramirez, Collage artists of America, 736 Price Dr., Burbank Ca 91504. Tel: 818-848-3502

Deadline December 1

### Vinyl Resting Place

Online exhibit through 6/00. Open to all artists; works must incorporate used LPs and 45s. First prize \$500 in CDs from Rykodisc. Jury fee \$15/3 slides. Must have entry form.

For prospectus SASE to: Vinyl Resting Place, KTOO-FM, 360 Egan Dr., Juneau, AK 99801. [www.juneau.com/vinyl](http://www.juneau.com/vinyl).

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### Prix Ars Electronica 1999

Annual international computer art competition for computer and multimedia art in Austria. Prize money: US \$116,379. No entrance fee. You can participate in one of the following categories: Computer Animation/Visual Effects, (Computer Animation refers to independent productions from the fields of art, science, etc. Visual Effects refers to commercial high-end productions from the fields of film, advertising, entertainment, etc.) Interactive Art; Net (e.g. Web galleries), Digital Music (e.g. digital artistic sound creations, electronica, performances, soundspace projects, netmusic, radio works, soundscapes, etc.).

For detailed information contact: Gabi Winkler. T: ++43-(0)732-6900-24563. F: ++43-(0)732-6900-24510. [gabi@prixars.orf.at](mailto:gabi@prixars.orf.at), or get information and entry form from Prix Ars Electronica Team, Europaplatz 3, A-4010 Linz, Austria. Europe [info@prixars.orf.at](mailto:info@prixars.orf.at). URL: <http://prixars.orf.at>

### Emerge

Gen Art SF keeps a slide registry that will continue to grow and be shared with the arts

community. Submissions are accepted to the artist registry on an ongoing basis and kept for at least two years. Artists must reside or maintain a studio in the Bay Area: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, Alameda, Marin, Napa, Sonoma or Solano counties and must be between 20 and 35 years old. A resume and documentation specific to discipline are required. Please include artist statements, press clippings and any other background material that is available. Categories include: Fine arts, film and video, or new media arts. The GEN ART slide registry serves as a resource for curators, gallerists, arts organizations and art consultants to view the work of emerging artists.

Mail entries to: Gen Art SF, P.O. Box 460819, San Francisco, CA 94146-0819. For more info contact: [<genartsf@sirius.com>](mailto:<genartsf@sirius.com>)

Deadline: October 15

### New Video National Juried Show, 12/1-8/15

Open to all U.S. artists working in video. No length restrictions.

Entry fee: \$20 first video, \$6 for each additional. Entry form required. For prospectus SASE to: Century Studios, 2561 16th Street, NW#805, Washington, DC 20009

Deadline Dec 1

### NFAA Fellowships in the Visual Arts

Open to emerging artists age 18-40 who have been practicing professionally for at least a year but not more than, American citizens or permanent residents. Selected fellows receive studio space, housing, a \$1000 monthly stipend, and funds for art supplies. At the residencies run in 4-month cycles and are renewable for three years. At the end of the residency, fellows will exhibit their work at the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

For application contact the Nat'l Foundation for the Advancement of Arts, 800 Brickell Ave., Suite 500, Miami, FL 33113 or call 1-800-970-ARTS. Website: [www.nfaa.org](http://www.nfaa.org). UNESCO Grants for Artists. This program aims to promote the professional growth of young artists under the age of 35 in all art disciplines, mainly by providing opportunities for further training or work residency abroad.

For more info see: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ifpcl>

Deadline June 30

Central Michigan University seeking to purchase artwork for the lobby of the building. One large wall (34'x24'h), and or two story atrium (continued on page 8)



## Ylem Calendar

space available. Open to all media except standing sculptures or pedestal pieces.

Site view and prospectus available at [www.cfa.cmich.edu/uag](http://www.cfa.cmich.edu/uag). Total project budget to include all expenses/installation: \$10,000. Slides, photos, resume to Dr.B. Ringquist, Wa 312 CMU, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859

No deadline

On-Line Magazine seeks quality art inspired by or about trends across the globe and their impacts on people. Published artists receive free membership and published biographical web page.

For more information send SASE to: Trend Magazine, Box 548, Carnation, WA 98014 or see [www.trendmag.com](http://www.trendmag.com), or [Joel\\_Ohringer@msn.com](mailto:Joel_Ohringer@msn.com)

## Needs & Offerings

### Visual Artist Information Hotline

Available to artists in the U.S. and its territories. The hotline is primarily a referral service that gives details on a wide variety of programs and services that they can apply to directly.

Staff assistance is available 2-5 P.M., Monday through Friday (voice mail any time). Information is sent by mail the same day in response to a call. 1-800-232-2789

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### Health care for Artists

For companies, Groups, and individuals. Major medical coverage, HMO, PPO, options first dollar emergency care options. *Olde Economie Risk Management, 511 State St., Baden, Pa 15005*

### .Locus+

.Locus+ is a visual arts facility that recognizes the partial incompatibility and imbalance in the relationship between contemporary artists and the exhibition mainstream. As part of an established history within the northern region of the UK, .Locus+ places the artist at the center of production and provides logistical and financial support to those who wish to work in different contexts and/or across formats. Through collaborative relationships with artists and organizations, it seeks to create opportunities and frameworks that are in response to artists initiatives.

See the website at [www.locusplus.org.uk](http://www.locusplus.org.uk) Jon Bewley and Simon Herbert, .Locus+, 17 3rd Floor, Wards Building 31-39, High Bridge Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1EW, UK t +44 (0) 191 233 1450 f +44 (0) 191 233 1451

### Chasing Rainbows

.Locus+ and Tramway invite you to the London and Stockholm book launches of Anya Gallaccio, *Chasing Rainbows*. *Chasing Rainbows* is the first major survey of Anya Gallaccio's work from the last ten years. The 64 page publication includes 40 colour and 25 b/w plates, an essay by Ralph Rugoff and an interview with the artist by Andrew Nairne.

*Camden Arts Centre Arkwright Road, London NW3 6DG Restaurang Tv-Plan, Malmskillnadsgatan 45 Stockholm*

### Conference Producer Needed

As *Worlds Collide: Conference Producer*. As *Worlds Collide: Independent Media Makers* and *The Introduction of Digital Television* is a two-day Conference slated for Spring 2000. The Conference Producer, working as necessary with subcontractors, will manage and supervise the management of: Publicity, promotion, and outreach; facility coordination; technical requirements; speaker/guest logistics (travel/hotel accommodations); registration; special events; volunteer coordination for such support activities as publicity,

registration, hospitality, and special events. The Conference Producer will join the team May/June 1999. Please submit a letter proposal explaining your interest in and qualifications for the position, a hypothetical timetable for producing the event (6/99-3/00), and fee range, exclusive of production expenses. Attach a resume or bio, and include contact information for three references.

Mail to:  
David Rosen  
As *Worlds Collide*  
345 Union Street,  
San Francisco, CA, 94133.  
phone: (415) 834-1852;  
fax: (415) 834-1853;  
[drosen@ix.netcom.com](mailto:drosen@ix.netcom.com)

## N A M A C

8

The National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) is a nonprofit association composed of diverse member organizations who are dedicated to encouraging film, video, audio and online/multimedia arts, and to promoting the cultural contributions of individual media artists.

*National Alliance for Media Arts & Culture, 346-9th St., San Francisco, CA. 94103 415-431-1391 phone 415-431-1392 fax [namac@namac.org](mailto:namac@namac.org) <http://www.namac.org>*

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## E M F

Electronic Music Foundation (EMF), [www.emf.org/guidetotheworld/](http://www.emf.org/guidetotheworld/), is a not-for-profit corporation that provides public access to the materials and infor-

mation that are essential to understanding the history and current development of music and related artforms in the technological age. You can search, keywords as identifiers for the

event or information you're looking for. A keyword can be the name of a composer, performer, artist, or presenter. A keyword can be a place or a time. It can be any word.

Electronic Music Foundation, Ltd.,  
116 North Lake Ave,  
Albany NY 12206  
United States  
Voice: (518) 434-4110  
Fax: (518) 434-0308  
[guide@emf.org](mailto:guide@emf.org)



## Knoebel: Words in Space

(continued from page 5)

office, reveal **additional** orderings of the same set of signs. The words become part of other events in our field of vision. They are no longer bound to a single **continuous** surface or to a **preordained** sequence.

However, the words are rarely part of an overall **composition**. One exception is **directional** signage such as that found on **interstate** highways and at airports. Although there are no physical

⑨ **connections** among them, the signs comprise a network whose overall design **determines** each **individual** sign's wording, format, and placement. Structure is implied, and the traveler proceeds with the **expectation** that similar signs will be found where they're needed.

The **sequential** Burma Shave verses also **constitute** such a network. Spread out along several hundred yards of roadside, the series is conceived as a whole. Each sign is similar to the others in size, placement, and lettering. The signs are roughly **equidistant**. Unlike **directional** signs, however, the entire set of Burma Shave signs is meant to be **remembered**. Unable to see all the words at once, the reader collects them in memory and **reconstructs** the piece later. While these signs have a primary **commercial** intent, they have made a cultural **impression** that goes beyond their original purpose. They raise the **possibility** of other, perhaps artistic, intents.

As an example, consider the following sentences: "See Spot run. Run, Spot, run!" Since these are familiar sentences, we can **concentrate** on the effect of

various formal **strategies**. Imagine the words printed singly on a series of **billboards** along a highway. On seeing the first sign, we might **experience puzzle-ment** about its seeming lack of **commercial** intent. Having seen the remaining signs, we may still be puzzled, and, in addition, feel an odd sense of **dislocation**. Why are sentences from an **elementary** school primer being displayed in this way? The words have been enlarged, but we expect this on **billboards**. The sentences, however, have become several hundred yards long, though each consists of only three words. Our **experience** of such a sentence is **considerably** different from that of the same sentence printed in a book that can be held in the hand.

The integrity of the sentence has been **challenged**. It no longer exists on a **continuous** plane. Other events occur within its **boundaries** as we read. By opening the sentence in this way, we allow those events to alter its meaning. Seen **separately**, each word takes on more **importance**. How do we maintain the coherence of the work? See. Spot. Run. What will keep the piece from falling apart and **disappearing** into its **environment**? We can take a cue from **directional** signage and the Burma Shave verses. Visual **consistency** is the key. Even **nonsyntactic** work will cohere in the landscape if it is **consistent** in its use of visual elements such as color, size, and font style.

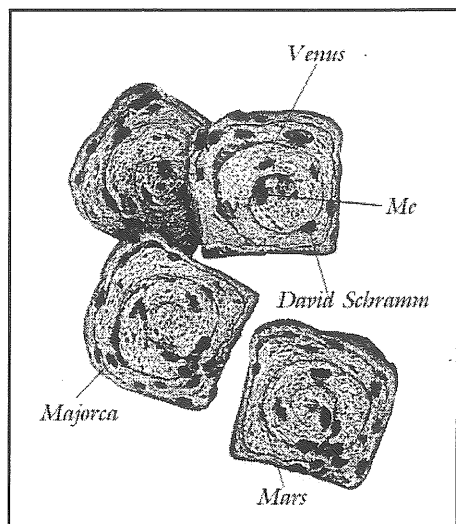
A further **difficulty** becomes apparent when we consider the **development** of these pieces. How do we duplicate the cycles of **inspiration** and revision

(continued on page 12)

# THE MEETING OF IMAGE & TEXT

By Christy Sheffield Sanford

For the most part, I create my experimental Web work, as probably many others do, in a state of divine naiveté. I don't think of threatening the future of literature or of usurping the cognitive role of text. Only recently when visited by a literary pundit, who reported back, "I prefer more text," did I realize the piece he had viewed contained little text. Yet, it was, to my mind, a visual poem.



I received early exposure and training in fine arts and graphics from my parents who were painters and commercial artists. My minor in college was art. When I began to seriously write, I gave up visual art, except for mail art to friends. Over time, visual art crept into my fiction and poetry. "Raisin Bread" was a turning point. This fictional work features Xeroxed pieces of raisin bread and manipulated images containing text. I have always regarded text as graphically interesting and language as something to be visually enjoyed. Typography and spatial interplay with figure ground seem fundamental. I see both language and imagery as rooted in efforts to communicate.

In his essay, "Disturbing History: New Technologies in Context," Karl Young states: "The main course of writing in western civilization has been towards ease of assimilation. . . .The largest transition was from signs with intrinsic pictorial and symbolic value to characters that recorded speech. There are expressive potentials in the graphic and etymological components of written Chinese that simply don't exist in the Roman alphabet." Some of the loss in pictorial quality has perhaps been re-registered in colorful sayings, slang and oral mnemonics.

In my Web work, I take pride in not illustrating; yet a recent meditation in my *Light-Water* series features a photo of a palm frond referred to in the text. The frond image is as much a statement on calligraphy as it is on the metaphoric association described in the text. For example, I mention hair and the image looks hair-like. I love images that proclaim multiple lines of connection with the text — subordinate from one perspective but from another, superior. The frond image forces attention into the realm of hidden messages, the writing on the wall, or in this case, the writing on the sidewalk. The cursive quality of the blades is like someone writing an overwrought and pas-

sionate love letter.

Young notes, "The pre-Columbian writing systems of central Mexico... (as distinct from the Mayan systems to the south) were iconographic — that is, they were based on common icons instead of spoken languages, so that people who spoke different languages could read them." Just as with film, in which we developed a cinematic shorthand — close up, quick cut and fade — now on the Web, we are accumulating a common set of icons. The icon blankets every desktop, every piece of software. Much of that sense of the iconic, I find, permeates my Web work.

Richard Lanham wrote that "electronic writing brings with it a complete renegotiation of the alphabet/icon ratio upon which print-based thought is built." Pictures and sounds are resuming a higher importance in cognition. In *ekphrasis*, one describes in writing the characteristics of something visual. Some argue, that increasingly in the computer medium, images explain text. Thus the logic goes that this causes a crisis in rhetoric, because traditionally words have been the locus of control.

Visual poetry has been kept out of mainstream edu-

(continued on page 12)

# Marsh: Poetries in Context

(continued from page 4)

In computer space, the potential for “actual” movement increases, as evidenced in Miekal And’s GIF-animated “after emmett” as well as several viewable Web installations using Javascript, dynamic HTML, streaming video, Shockwave and Shockwave Flash, and many other tools for generating movement on the screen. Kenneth Goldsmith and Clem Paulson’s “fidget,” [<http://stadiumweb.com/fidget/>] for example, uses Java applet coding (as well as sound files) to create an extraordinary blend of text and “liquid” morphing, with user-guided mouse clicks and drags teasing subtle changes in the direction and saturation of screen objects.

*Visual-Kinetic poetries in the space-time of digital codification convey both a continuation and an acceleration of traditional activities...*

Visual-Kinetic poetries in the space-time of digital codification convey both a continuation and an acceleration of traditional activities — most notably the Visual-Concrete poetry and Kinetic Art movements of the 1950’s and 60’s.<sup>iv</sup> In defining its current parameters, it helps to regard these early models as both guideposts and launch pads for future experimentation. If poetry operates in adhesion to and in violation of these histories, then part of understanding it lies in careful examination of the kinds of materials (pages and screens) used by poets then and poets now. The textures of today’s digital poetries therefore lie in the cross-weaves of virtual page movement and actual screen kinetics.

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## Notes

- <sup>i</sup> I discuss “motility” in relation to page and screen poetics more thoroughly in “Exposing the Nerve: Notes on Memory, Hypertext & Poetry” (Witz 5.2). A hypertext version of this essay can be accessed at (<http://bmarsh.dtai.com/Works/essays/-hypertext/expos/exposing.html>)
- <sup>ii</sup> American poet Charles Olson, in his pivotal “Projective Verse” essay of 1950, employed a similar terminology in defining the poem as a “high-energy construct” and a “high-energy discharge” (Olson, 47). In positing the “kinetics of the thing” in relation to energy and speed, Olson’s method of “open field” composition could be said to foreground contemporary practices for which animation, streaming video and dynamic or cascading objects offer real-time instantiations of the high-energy construct.
- <sup>iii</sup> For a longer discussion of this history, see Chapter 5 of Frank Popper’s *Origins and Development of Kinetic Art*.
- <sup>iv</sup> Note should also be made of VisKin poetry’s several other informants — film, broadcast and performance art in particular, but also the video and holographic poetry experiments of Brazilian poet Eduardo Kac. See the latter’s “Key Concepts of Holopoetry” [online at <http://www.altx.com/ebr/ebr5/kac.htm>] in which Kac outlines a poetics of holographic poetry, the key terms of which are widely applicable to more recent computer arts. While here I have chosen to stress VisKin’s origins in Visual-Concrete poetry, its debts to these other art forms are clearly worth further investigation.

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# Knoebel: Words in Space

(continued from page 5)

that are so important in making art? This is a common problem faced by **installation** artists who work on a large scale. One solution is to model **interactions** of text and **multidimensional** space on a computer. We can complete cycles of revision that are impossible even with scale models. In fact, these computer models can become ends in **themselves**. Virtual Reality Modeling Language, or VRML, enables us to create deep pages that reveal different **relationships** among words from different points of view. We can probe clusters of text arrayed like galaxies in the cosmos, and we can program other events to occur among the words we choose.

### 3. Conclusion

We have seen that words can be composed in space as well as on the printed page or computer screen. These words can achieve coherence across great distances through consistent use of graphic elements. Our readings may be altered by other events occurring among the words. The act of reading combines with the sensation of movement. Gaps of time and space between words become significant. They give artists an opportunity to examine the experience of discontinuous simultaneity that has become an important part of our lives.

### 4. End

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# Sanford: Image & Text

(continued from page 10)

cation and the canon. The rigid compartmentalization of genres is a relatively recent 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. Visual poetry has largely been treated as a novelty, a charming aberration. Apollinaire's visual experiments might inspire an exercise but not a career. For one intimate with this form, combining image and text is not shocking.

Some visual poets dive into the Web, others find it lacking. Joel Lipman has a riveting performance. He reads one of his poems that has been stamped onto a page from a very old book. Then he crumbles it before the audience's eyes. This dramatizes the fragility of the book and the temporal experience of seeing-hearing a poem. The ephemeral nature of a poem's reading, its essence, has crumbled to dust before your eyes. If you don't remember it, too bad. On the Web, something can vanish, be erased, but it can't have that tactile quality of paper in hand.

Recently in creating a piece called "Gender and the Web: Couched in Ideas," I used hidden layers. In this dynamic HTML work, the viewer touches an image and an enormous rollover appears. This is a flamingo pink, clearly worded paragraph. I consider this text as image. By the same token, I think an image can be quite literary. Here I do not refer to illustration but rather to calligraphic markings, iconic scratches, messages left in a pre-literate society. This is not to say primitive. I think vision can be quite sophisticated and certainly less hampered by intermediary censors.

The appearance of the hidden layer has another characteristic that is at once maddening and fascinating. This type of rollover oscillates. It reminds me of Katherine Hayles' discussion of fluctuating reality: "Information technologies create what I will call flickering signifiers, characterized by their tendency toward

(continued on page 13)

# Sanford: Image & Text

(continued from page 12)

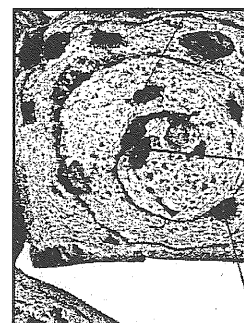
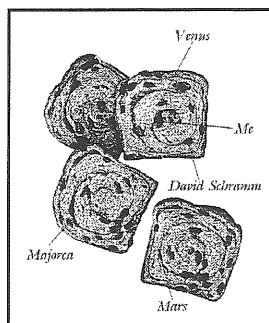
unexpected metamorphoses, attenuations, and dispersions. Flickering signifiers signal an important shift in the plate tectonics of language." And in this seismic event, one can, with DHTML, see subconscious revelations, alternative viewpoints and glossed realities.

With dynamic HTML, page choreography does not depend on linking. I am interested in expressing the deeper emotions and also in creating mood and setting. How these can succeed on the Web is one of my problems. The link has, I believe, been over-emphasized. I feel "Red Mona," my first Web piece, which has no links, was more conceptually hypertextual than many heavily linked pieces. Nothing I have read suggests a link should lead to another HTML page or be accompanied by a sense of jumping. Unfortunately, this is how hypertext has been reduced. Ideally hypertext points out lines of connection, options, inclusions that enlarge the work at hand.

13 In Olia Lialina's highly witty "Agatha Appears," cut out figures converse with strips of dialogue that appear as the viewer approaches the characters with the cursor. The bodies and clothes are splashed with text — digital lingo discourse. This use of image and text turns the whole notion of visual ascendancy upside down. How could that be, one might ask, if the imprint of the medium is so deep. The image has been penetrated, mind is all over the

body. The excitement, the energy, is indeed in the hands of those combining image and text. This is the mountain to climb.

In working on a series of Light-Water meditations, I have again perused one of my favorite books, *Mira Calligraphiae Monumenta*, a 16th century illuminated manuscript. In an introductory essay, Lee Hendrix describes a pitched battle for supremacy between two disciplines. Hoefnagel, the illuminator, refused to imitate the narrative passages so eloquently laid out some fifteen years earlier by Bocskay. Indeed, Hoefnagel invaded the calligraphy and imitated the words with his plant and animal imagery. Something I like much better is Hendrix's description of a "response" by the illuminator. It is that interplay, that sense of responsiveness of one art form to another, that I find essential, aesthetically satisfying, and advanced.



"Raisin Bred"

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Christy Sheffield Sanford <[christys@gnv.fdt.net](mailto:christys@gnv.fdt.net)> <http://gnv.fdt.net/~christys/is> a Web-specific artist and writer. In 1998, her work "NoPink" was awarded The Well's prize for the Best Hyperlinked Work on the Web. Christy was recently selected as Trent-Nottingham University's trAce Virtual Writer-in-Residence. ■



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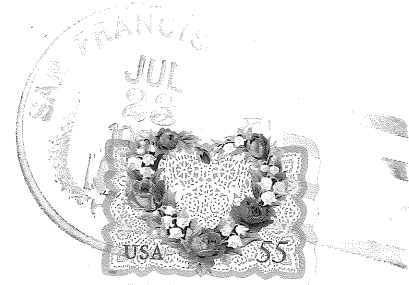


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